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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

June 27, 1862.
SCHOOL COMMITTEE. *84128*

PRESENTED TO THE TOWN,

AT AN ADJOURNED MEETING HELD ON

MONDAY, APRIL 4,

1842.

REPORT.

THE citizens of Roxbury have good reason to be gratified with the provision which they have made for public instruction. There has been a great advance within the last five years, in the interest felt by our community in this department of our municipal system. And there has been a corresponding advance in the character of our common schools. The increased appropriations, which the town has from year to year been pleased to make for purposes of education, have incited your Committee to careful vigilance and fidelity in the discharge of their duty, and have enabled them to call into our service teachers of eminent competen-

cy ; — and to furnish the best facilities for the work of instruction.

The tendency of all this has been, not only to make our schools *better*, but to make them *more popular*. Limited as they are, and ought to be, to instruction in the *fundamental* branches of an English education, they possess, when well conducted, advantages which cannot be shared by schools where various studies are pursued. In their sphere of service they can have no rivals. Since the standard of excellence in our public schools has been properly elevated, the truth of this remark has come to be felt by a larger proportion of our people. And the increase of attendants at our public schools has been recently much more than commensurate with the ratio of increase in our population. Parents have been withdrawing their children from private establishments, and committing them to our common nurseries of learning. It is a remarkable fact, that, in the Westerly district and in this Eastern section of the town, there are, (with the exception of an incipient boarding school at the “ Roxbury Community,”) at this time no private schools for boys, save those which may be called infant schools. At Jamaica Plain, private schools, long established and of deservedly high reputation, which derive nearly their entire support from other towns and conduct their pupils through more advanced studies, are still sustained and prosperous. As establishments for children from abroad, and for the

prosecution of the higher branches, we hope they may so continue. Whatever contributes to make our town attractive, as a place for the education of the young, whether established by public or private enterprize, is entitled to the favor and best wishes of our citizens. Thus, we see, that there are in fact no private schools for boys within the limits of this town, which look to our own population for their pecuniary support, or which would continue to exist, if open only to the children of our own people. This fact tells at once the character of our Public Schools, and the hold which they have obtained upon the confidence of the community.

And, besides the increase which has accrued to our public schools by transfers from private ones, it cannot be doubted that some parents, — heretofore indifferent to the education of their children, and permitting them to ‘grow up like calves of the stall,’ — have been aroused to a sense of the value of public instruction, by the report of its excellence, now so widely felt and so often proclaimed.

It may seem to some, that this great increase of the number attending our Common Schools is rather an occasion for regret, than satisfaction ;—and that it were better that they, who can afford it, should maintain their children at private schools. ‘New school-houses would not then be needed — additional teachers would not be every year required ; and consequently the public

tax would be kept from augmentation.' Your Committee do not endorse these views. We think it one of the brightest aspects of our educational establishment, that our public schools are no longer regarded as in an invidious sense *free* schools, for them only who could attend no other ; — but, in the best sense, *public, common* schools, where the children of the rich and of the poor are equally favored in the opportunity to meet. They thus adapt themselves better to our political institutions : and contribute to produce that community of principles and feelings, which in the future manhood of the rising generation will cause them to act with harmony in the fulfilment of their civil duties.

And, besides, — the larger proportion we can infuse into the mass of our common school pupils of such as will carry with them the gentle and courteous manners, the correct and pure language, and the good morals of educated and refined life, — the more we do to dispense a species of learning which our teachers can but partially confer, and which is not less conducive to the comfort, respectability, and good order of society, than the more substantial acquirements derived from books. We wish to create, in these miniature communities, a preponderance of influence in favor of manly character and good breeding, — and thus to equalize society in the right way — by levelling *up*, and not *down* !

Moreover, since the Law very wisely requires them who have property, to sustain schools for them who

have not, we conceive that it is for the pecuniary, as well as social and political interest of the rich to expend enough beyond the bare exaction of the Law to make the Public Schools perfectly efficient in their elevating influence upon the poor, and available also for the education of their own offspring.

Our public schools in Roxbury are of two classes : — PRIMARY, of which there are in number 14 ; and GRAMMAR SCHOOLS, of which there are 4.

Of the Primary Schools, collectively, we may say that they are in good condition. The teachers, generally, are not only competent and assiduous, but possess a qualification not less essential to success, — *tact* and *aptitude* for their difficult and important work : — difficult, because they receive the divers elements, of which our schools are formed, in the rough, unfashioned state ; and important — because on their influence, more than on any subsequent training, depends the stamp of manners, scholarship, and character, which must distinguish our schools of a higher grade. We therefore aim, in these schools, to impart only the veriest elements of learning, — correct orthography, — distinct enunciation, — freedom from tone in reading, — knowledge of punctuation, — and good school habits. If they perfect their pupils in these particulars, we feel that they do their work. Our Primary Schools ought to be, and we think

are, the best nurseries in which to train children for admission to the Grammar Schools. To make them entirely efficient, parents must feel, no less than your Committee, and Teachers, the important relation which these schools bear to the whole course of public instruction. If the foundation be not well laid in that stage of childhood to which these schools are adapted, the defect can never be repaired in later years and higher schools. People are quite prone to think that the time of a little child is of small value ; — that, if he lose a day occasionally from his school, it will hardly reduce the modicum of learning which he is expected to gain there. The amount of positive attainment, which he thus foregoes, is indeed trifling. But the influence of his irregularity upon his habits of thought and action, we think very injurious. The child, who begins his school life with *permitted inconstancy* and *tardiness* at school, will almost certainly imbibe a low conceit of its importance, and in the later years of his boyhood give himself up to *idleness* in school, or *truancy* from it !

In the District now occupied by No. 13, between Tremont and Ruggles streets, additional school accommodation is immediately required. The schoolhouse is literally overflowing. It is resorted to by more than one hundred children : — and the section of the Town from which its pupils are gathered is so distant from other schools, that it is impracticable to send the surplus

elsewhere. Your Committee are of opinion, that the best and most economical method of meeting this pressing necessity is, — to purchase a small piece of land adjoining that on which School-house No. 13 now stands, — to turn round the present building, — and add to it a second story. In our schedule of estimates for the wants of the coming year, we will present one on these proposed alterations. The other Primary school-houses will demand, — we now anticipate, — only ordinary repairs. In No. 13 we have already found it necessary to employ an additional teacher. No. 6, on Jamaica Plain, supported during the past year by the Trustees of the Eliot School, is again dependent on the Town for the pay of its Teacher ; — the Trustees having officially signified their inability to supply the necessary means, and requested your Committee to assume the support of this school for one year. Thus, provision will be required for two Primary School Teachers in addition to the number maintained last year.

Of the four Grammar Schools, let us speak more in detail.

That in Spring-Street, called ‘ the Westerly School,’ is in a very satisfactory and still improving state. The number of attendants has been larger the past winter than ever before. Industrious habits, and eagerness to excel, distinguish both Teacher and scholars. Situa-

ted in a farming district, this school suffers somewhat from the withdrawal of its elder scholars during the season of labor ; — though we are happy to express the belief, that this evil is every year becoming less grievous. And the truth is gaining ground, — *that study is the appropriate occupation of youth, and productive labor the allotted employment of age.*

The Eliot School on Jamaica Plain is advancing, we believe, to its true place in the first rank. A spirit of renewed effort and activity seems to have infused itself into the Teacher and his charge, — which, *if continued within the school, — and approved and sustained without,* will surely make it all that its friends can desire. It is but just to the Teachers who have been employed there, to say that they have lacked material out of which to form classes of *sufficient permanency* to give time for good scholarship. That portion of the population of that village, who feel the place able to surrender the whole time of their children to the purposes of education, have generally found themselves so well supplied with private schools of high character that they have been comparatively indifferent to their public privilege. And, of the rest, a large number send their sons, as the cold season advances, into the small but established classes ; — possessed, of course, of very unequal attainments ; — coming at divers times, — and therefore continually deranging the order, and de-

teriorating the average in scholarship, of the whole school. The entrance of such pupils cannot, and of course ought not, to be prevented. But we do suggest, that it is a question worthy the serious attention of every parent, whether what is *saved to himself*, by confining his child to manual labor for six or nine months of a year, is not *lost, fourfold, to his offspring*, by the incompetency for the pursuit of a respectable calling with which he shall grow up to manhood. And we suggest further, that it may be necessary, (for the good of that school especially,) that our successors in office assign particular periods when applicants can be admitted to school of that grade : — say — on the first Monday of each month. The proportion of transient scholars is far greater at the Eliot School, than at any other in the town. Let it be furnished, as our other Grammar Schools are, with the children of all classes residing in its neighborhood, and we see no reason why it should be surpassed by its fellows of the same order.

The Dudley School for Girls, in Crescent-Street, continues to maintain its high character. Indeed, good as it was last year, we think it is still advancing in excellence. Happy is it for all interested, that a school, like all the works of man, is never so complete that it cannot be rendered better. Thus, there is always some-

thing to aspire after. The Teachers and scholars of the Dudley School with laudable ambition are ever pressing for higher attainments.

A change in the whole furniture of this School is very desirable, and, in the upper room, cannot longer be deferred. The forms are narrow and inconvenient, and the seats so ill-adapted to scholars of so mature age as theirs who now occupy them, that it is little less than inhuman to subject the Misses entrusted to our care to the discomfort and peril which they must now experience. These fixtures were removed from the school-rooms heretofore in the second story of the Town-House. We shall present an estimate of the expense of furnishing the upper room in the most approved manner ; and doubt not that the Town will agree with us, that no call is more imperative than that which summons us to guard the *health*, as well as provide for the instruction of the young.

The Washington School for Boys had only just gone into operation at the period of the last annual report. The vast increase of children, claiming public instruction since the erection of that noble building, fully vindicates the good policy of the Town, in making it so spacious and substantial. Already more than 300 are enjoying its advantages. The finished rooms are full :—and, at the same rate of increase which has been experienced through the past year, the probable

influx of the next two months can, (in so much of the building as is now ready for occupancy,) be in no way accommodated. What will the Town do in this emergency? Has not the time arrived for the finishing and furnishing the Hall in the second story? This would afford conveniences for 200 more. Your Committee, though desirous to keep their estimates for school expenditures within the bounds of strictest economy, feel themselves compelled to recommend an appropriation for the immediate fitting up of the aforesaid room;—and will accordingly submit an estimate of the probable expense.

The schools, already established in that building, deserve the high esteem, which their constant increase in numbers so emphatically attests. The Teachers merit all praise. Their labors have been arduous, and they have been successful. They have made an excellent beginning. Their standard is a high one, and they will do whatever competency, perseverance and zeal can effect towards its attainment.

The Schools, which it has been the duty of your Committee to supervise, are not all, to which the youth of this Town are privileged to repair without individual cost. Opportunity to obtain *classical instruction* preparatory to entrance at the University is offered, without charge, at 'the Roxbury Grammar School.' This school, though not falling under our official examination, is, we feel assured, taught with distinguished

ability and faithfulness. A number of Boys, large in proportion to our population (if we measure by the attendance at the Boston Latin School) is pursuing a course of classical study at this institution. Could an arrangement be made, by which a complete and permanent English department should be established there, corresponding in its range of studies with that pursued at the Boston English High School, and deriving its supply of scholars, at stated times, and according to fixed rules, from our Common Grammar Schools, we should then have as perfect a system of home education, as exists in any town or city in the Union.

Any one of our Citizens, who is a father of young children, may bless God that he lives in Roxbury, where facilities for education are so eminently good, and free. Henceforth he, whose child shall grow up among us in ignorance, is without excuse. He does not deserve the name of a Citizen, and should himself, with his offspring, be subjected to guardianship.

We feel constrained to call attention to a source of expense in the conduct of our Public Schools, which might, we are persuaded, be very much relieved, if all parents who are able would fulfil their duty in taking it upon themselves, and discharging it with promptness. We allude to the supplying destitute children with books. Much of the original expenditure for this purpose is indeed recovered, after long delay. But how

needless the trouble thus occasioned!—He, who can afford to pay for his children's books when importuned by the Teacher, or at the end of the year, when they may be charged on his Tax-bill, could, in ordinary cases, have afforded to pay for them when they were wanted. Where instruction costs the individual nothing, it is not too much to expect, that he will *readily* furnish the necessary implements, and, however poor, by proper economy, or personal sacrifice, save the Town this supplementary charge.

It is proper that we direct the notice of our fellow-citizens to an Act, passed at the late session of the General Court of this Commonwealth, appropriating fifteen dollars to the use of every School District, in which not less than an equal sum shall be raised by contribution, for the purchase of a School Library.

We conclude this report by submitting the estimates, which, (omitting all expenses which can with justice to the public interests be deferred,) we judge to be absolutely necessary for the proper support of our public schools through the current municipal year : —

For pay of Teachers	\$7679
For fuel for all the Schools	600
For repairs and incidentals	395
For books for indigent Scholars	100
For pay of School Committee	150
For finishing and furnishing second story of Wash- ington School-House	1000
For new seats and forms in upper room, Dudley School-house	200
For alteration and enlargement of School-house No. 13, including purchase of additional land, and turn- ing round the present building	900
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	Aggregate \$11024

For *ordinary* expenses, these estimates do not differ materially from the appropriations made last year. The demand for an increase of school accommodation is a matter which your Committee cannot repress.

The Auditor's report of expenses incurred for schools during the year of our service, shows that we exceeded your appropriation in the sum of 16 dls. 83 cts. We have endeavored to exercise all proper economy, and in all respects to discharge our duty with diligence and fidelity. And, surrendering again into your hands the trust which you committed to us, we are happy in the belief, that your Public Schools, through the faithfulness and industry of your Teachers, have made good progress,

and have not materially suffered in so much of their interests as has devolved on our care.

Of the services of one of our number, we may now speak without reserve. 'The late Rev. George Whitney was one of the most active and useful members of this Board. And, in the review of his arduous labors and lively interest in the cause of common education, we cannot but regard his death as a public loss ; and we call upon our fellow-citizens to cherish, with us, grateful recollections of his useful services, and sorrow for his sudden and early departure.

Respectfully submitted,

By order of the Committee,

M. A. DE WOLFE HOWE,
CHAIRMAN.

Roxbury, April 4th, 1842.

